



OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

County of Sampson, NC

112 Fontana Street, Clinton, NC 28328

SHERIFF JIMMY THORNTON



PRESS RELEASE

DATE: March 20, 2024

Topic: Firearm Seized at Hobbton Middle School

Contact: Capt. Eric Pope (epope@sampsonsheriff.com)

Newton Grove, NC – On Wednesday, March 20, 2024, a student at Hobbton Middle School alerted a staff member to the possibility that a student had a firearm on campus as school was letting out for the day. Simultaneously, a bus attempting to leave the premises stopped and students evacuated the bus after it was determined that the firearm could possibly be on the bus.

Law enforcement and school staff immediately responded to the incident and students were escorted back to a secure location within the school. A search by officials led to the discovery of a stolen firearm on a juvenile, who was immediately taken into custody. The preliminary investigation revealed that a juvenile brought a small pistol to school, and at least four juveniles were involved in or had knowledge of the firearm on campus.

No one was injured during the events. Lock down procedures were immediately followed by school system staff. Additional law enforcement officers and personnel from the Sheriff's Office, Newton Grove Police Department, the Clinton Police Department, and Sampson County Emergency Services responded to assist with security and searches.

The Sheriff's Office is investigating how the juvenile came into possession of the stolen firearm. The incident is still under investigation and anyone with information is asked to contact the Sampson County Sheriff's Office at (910) 592-4141.

The Sampson County Sheriff's Office and the Sampson County School System are committed to ensuring the safety of our students. In accordance with NC Juvenile Law, all four juveniles in possession of the firearm have been referred to the NC Department of Juvenile Justice.

"This is a serious incident that could have been tragic. Thankfully, a brave and alert student chose to do a courageous thing and report what they saw. I'm thankful for the quick response of school staff and law enforcement." – Sheriff Jimmy Thornton